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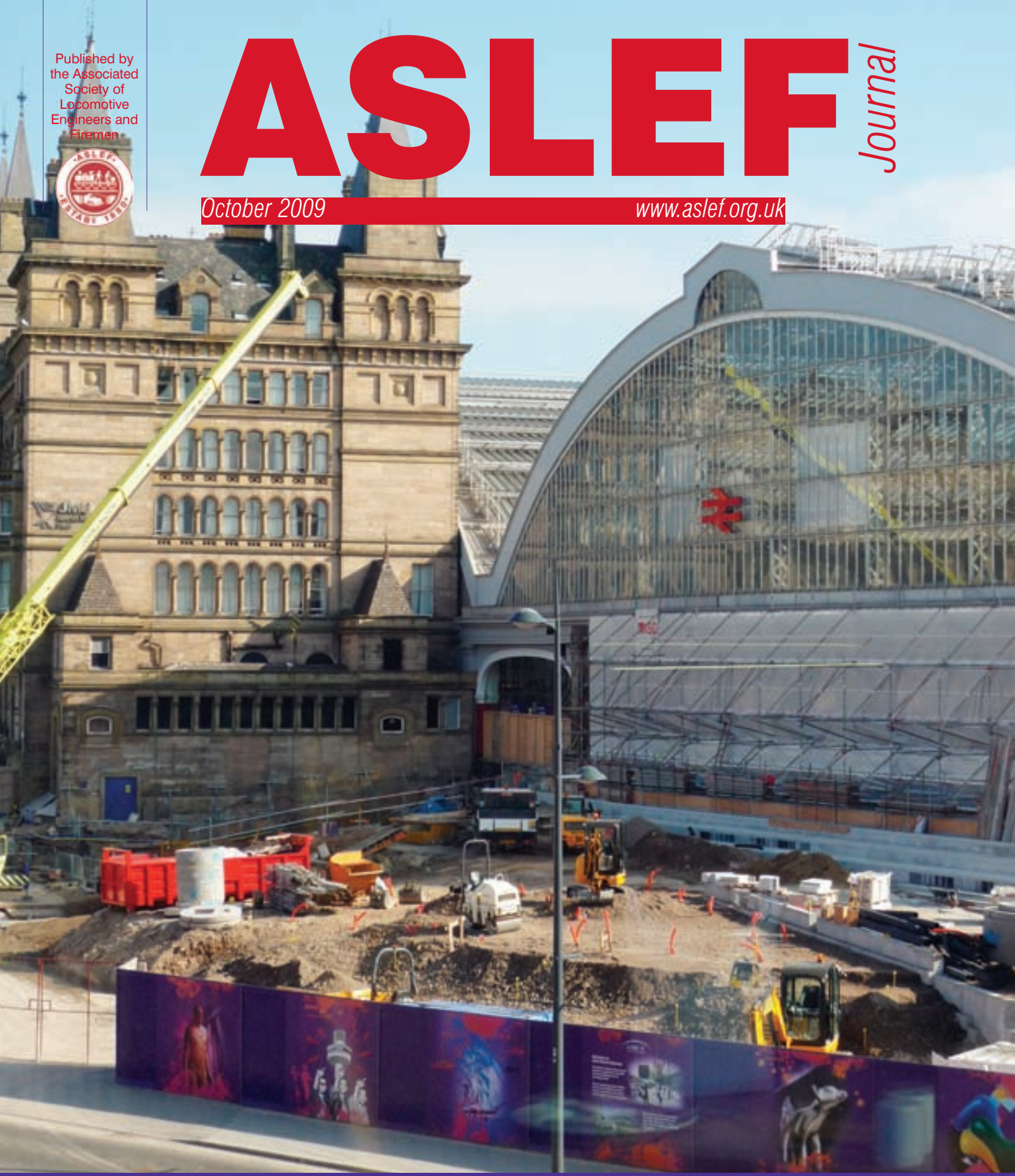

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the **ASLEF** Journal

NEWS

Another day, another death on the crossing ▮ London Midland reinstates weekend working terms **4**

Warning over Tube safety as trains go through red lights **5**

Union warns against Network Rail redundancies ▮ ASLEF joins Lawrence Daly tributes **6**

NXEA – An honourable truce **7**

Information might be free – but it's difficult to get hold of! **8**

Solicitors: The good news **9**

We all deserve a decent retirement ▮ Underground Update **10**

FEATURES

Franchising – Heads they win, tails they win **11**

ASLEF at TUC Conference **12-13**

Key Worker: Hellish running for heavenly Holly **14**

REGULARS

15 Keeping track

16 Obituaries

17-19 Branch News

20-22 Letters

23 Prize Crossword ▮ Legal services for members

WE MUST LEARN FROM, AND NOT JUST LAMENT, LADBROKE GROVE

It is ten years since the 5 October 1999 Ladbroke Grove train crash that injured some 400 people and took the lives of 31 others, including Drivers Michael Hodder and Brian Cooper. For months after this tragedy I sat through the traumas of the Cullen Enquiry. It was the most taxing and stressful period of my working life. Every day brought new grief, anger and desperation.

I vowed then, as I do today, that I would do everything in my power to ensure we had the safest railway system in the world. I do not want Michael and Brian to have died in vain. It still haunts me that they should still be here, enjoying their lives. They died in a disaster that should never have happened. One that could have been prevented.

Train drivers and other experts gave evidence that there had been persistent difficulty in the sighting of the signals between Paddington Station and Ladbroke Grove, and in particular those on gantry 8. One signal - SN109 - had been passed at danger on eight occasions since August 1993. Eight SPADs in six years – and nothing had been done.

I sat in the same room as the families of the dead and saw their disbelief turn to anger and then to bitterness. It was impossible not to share in their sorrow and grief.

Drivers, and therefore their trains and passengers, are reliant on the signalling system. Without efficient signals we don't have a railway, we have a lottery: a gamble with death. Signals are the core of, and the key to, rail safety. That is why ASLEF must be committed to pushing for the introduction of the best possible systems. Currently that is the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS). It is scheduled for introduction sometime in the 2020s. It would include features such as radio block control, continuous updates to the driver and could dispense entirely with lineside signals.

I don't deny that we have made progress on signalling, but I believe that too often we settle for too little until the next disaster is caused. When I see the rate of change of other technologies – for music, communications and entertainment – I ask myself how much of this could be applied to rail safety.

Railway signalling is the poor relations of the iPod, GPS, HD TV and all the rest. We still do not benefit from new technology as we deserve – and as the memories of Drivers Hodder and Cooper demand.

KEITH NORMAN
GENERAL SECRETARY

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ANOTHER DAY, ANOTHER DEATH ON THE CROSSING

KEITH NORMAN says that the number of deaths at railway crossings is growing into a national shame and scandal.

Last month near Peterborough a mother saw her two-year-old son hit by a train and killed at a crossing guarded by metal railing gates which pulled open.

Keith Norman, the general secretary of ASLEF, the train drivers' union, added, 'We all mourn for the small child who lost his life so unnecessarily today. We can't stress enough to our young people that a railway track is even more lethal and dangerous than it is exciting.

'But please remember too that a death on the line has tragic consequences far beyond the immediate event. I ask you to think how the driver of that train will feel today, and for months and perhaps years to come. It doesn't help that he is entirely innocent. Often the trauma of these events can ruin a driver's occupation, and even his life.

'It might help to stress this to young people as we try to educate them in rail safety. The evil effects of these incidents spread out like a disease, touching families and colleagues far remote from those who were at the scene of the accident.'

LONDON MIDLAND REINSTATES WEEKEND WORKING TERMS

Six months ago, in order to boost performance after a poor start to the year mainly caused by track work and adverse weather, London Midland advised ASLEF that it intended to enhance rates for weekend working to ensure it had all the volunteers for Sunday working it required. The union hadn't made a claim but noted the improvement with some satisfaction.

Early last month the company suddenly decided to drop the rates again – and found itself with the merest handful of volunteers on Sunday 6 August. So few, in fact, that the service virtually ceased to operate.

The following week London Midland advised ASLEF of its intention to reintroduce the terms for weekend working which it had taken away the previous weekend.

THANKS FOR RETURNING SURVEY FORMS

National Organiser Simon Weller says he's delighted with the response to the membership survey we included in the August edition of the Journal. 'It's well above the return you would expect – but then again, ASLEF members seldom do anything predictable!' he said. 'The information is being analysed at present. We want to make sure we do it properly, especially as we have had this excellent response.'

As an incentive to return the surveys, the union offered three £50 shopping vouchers and three 'mystery prizes'.

The winners of the vouchers were Drivers A. Sheehan (Bournemouth), I Dilley (Spalding) and M. Letley (Horsham). The other prize winners were A. Hall (Cambridgeshire), K.G. Wellavize (Cornwall) and M. Wall (Cheshire).

DO YOU WANT YOUR JOURNAL POSTED TO YOU – OR SENT BY EMAIL?

It's written into our rule book that all members are entitled to receive a copy of the ASLEF Journal each month – but it doesn't specify how you receive it. Following a decision at this year's annual conference (AAD) we have now introduced a facility, if you choose, for you to stop receiving a posted copy and start getting your Journal sent to you by email.

To take advantage of the new facility, you will need to go to the ASLEF web page (www.aslef.org.uk) and click on the 'Publications' and then 'Locomotive Journal' buttons. Click on the relevant text to bring up a form allowing you to subscribe (or unsubscribe) to the email mailing list.

Please note that if you choose this option you will no longer get a paper version.

UNION SAVOURS BNP DISARRAY

ASLEF is taking particular satisfaction from the BNP's disarray following its admission that its racist and discriminatory membership rules will have to be changed. The extreme right wing organisation will have to redraft its rules which currently ban people on ethnic grounds.

'It is only a couple of years ago that this union was taken to court because we wanted to expel members of this thuggish party,' says ASLEF general secretary. 'We won that legal battle and secured the right of unions not to have as members people who opposed our policies of equal opportunity and dignity for all. We struck a blow for decency and against racism'.

'It's very satisfying to see the alarm being caused within the BNP because the law now insists that they have to conform to the Race Relations Act because its rules are discriminatory. They particularly fear the forthcoming Equalities Act which will include clauses directly caused by the ASLEF legal victory in the European Court of Human Rights. '

The BNP says it favours discrimination being enshrined in its rules 'to secure a future for the true children of our islands' and threatens the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and the rest of the 'curs'' with retaliatory legal action - but can't currently find a reason to do so!

'We were charged because we stood up for the rights of all people regardless of their race, creed, sexual orientation or gender. That was the right thing to do.

'Today our vigorous defence is entirely justified as the BNP is taken to court for deliberately discriminating on the grounds of race.'

WARNING OVER TUBE SAFETY AS TRAINS GO THROUGH RED LIGHTS

UNDERGROUND bosses have been told to dramatically improve safety on the District line after three trains this year passed red danger signals and key procedures were not followed.

- a train set off an automatic braking system on 23 February, meaning the signal is treated as being passed at red even if it is not. It emerged that points were not secured, risking a derailment, and communications were described as 'poor'. This was at West Kensington.
- the following day at Earl's Court a westbound service passed through a signal at red.
- in March a train was ordered to pass a red signal after a points failure – but without the authorisation of the appropriate senior manager.

The Railway Inspectorate, the regulator responsible for Tube travel, has told Tube managers to come up with plans to prevent more signals being passed at danger - or face legal action.

Steve Grant, London Underground district organiser for ASLEF said the union had repeatedly warned of the 'dangers of putting train service above safety of passengers' and suggested that 'reports of some incidents have been falsified or covered up'.

ATOC DENIES POOR ADVICE

The Association of Train Operators (ATOC) has denied that passengers are paying over the odds for train tickets because of poor advice from rail staff.

A report by Which? claims that passengers are being misled by two out of three ticket sellers and two in five National Rail Enquiries workers.

A Which? researcher was quoted £75 for a trip between London and Grantham when the cheapest option was actually £22. However ATOC says the report is 'misleading' and claims its own figures show a 99% accuracy rate when advising passengers on the cheapest available fares.

DO YOU RECOGNISE ANYONE?!!

James McGowan found a 'wonderful piece of verse' in 'Union Man', the autobiography of the late Jack Jones. We reproduce the 'workshop ditty' here – and ask if you recognise anyone…!

'Who is the worst paid man today?
With haggard looks and hair turned grey,
Who's blamed when things do not go right,
Who gets no rest by day or night?
Though never having been to college
He must possess the widest knowledge,
On rates of pay and hours of labour
And how to keep pace with one's neighbour,
Of income tax and how to pay it,
What's best to say and when to say it,
The how and why and which and when,
Of all the problems known to men.
If with the foreman he's agreed,
He's sold the men or been weak-kneed.
For when the men he tries to cater,
He's called a blinking agitator.
Who is this chap? What don't you know him?
Or how much do you really owe him?
This chap whose torment is assured,
Is no-one else but your SHOP STEWARD'.

This poem was quoted a lot in trade union circles during the Second World War, but we don't know who wrote it.

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UNION WARNS AGAINST NETWORK RAIL REDUNDANCIES

ASLEF last month expressed concern over plans by Network Rail to make up to 1,800 staff redundant amid fears that the cuts could endanger the travelling public.

The cuts are being made in response to demands by the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) that Network Rail reduce its costs by 21% over the next five years.

Earlier in the year Network Rail announced the deferral of important infrastructure works that would enhance both the safety and capacity of the rail network.

The reduction in Network Rail's budget has also had a significant effect on Freight Operating Companies who had to be contracted to deliver the work. These further job cuts will hinder the long term ability of the infrastructure company to develop a safe and efficient railway fit for 21st century Britain.

Keith Norman said, 'Investment in railway infrastructure is by nature a long term investment. Skills lost now through redundancy will not only effect train services in the immediate future but also in the decades to come.'

ASLEF JOINS LAWRENCE DALY TRIBUTES

- a report from the union's District 2 Organiser, Kevin Lindsay

Chris Barrie, the Chair of Edinburgh No 2 branch, and myself were privileged to be among 500 trade unionists and political activists - including Prime Minister, Gordon Brown - who gathered in Dunfermline Abbey on 20 August to commemorate the life of Lawrence Daly.

Lawrence, who died in May aged 84, worked his way from the coalfields of Fife to become General Secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers. He started work as a miner in the Glencraig Colliery at the age of 15 and went on to become chair of the Scottish TUC's youth movement, a Fife councillor and in 1968 he was elected NUM general secretary. He was instrumental in replacing 'piece work' with a national day wage structure and led the union through the strikes of '72 and '74.

It was during these and subsequent disputes that the bond between the NUM and ASLEF was cemented as ASLEF drivers, supporting their miner brothers, refused to operate coal trains. During subsequent miners' strikes ASLEF spent a large portion of its annual income making up the wages of drivers who had lost income by refusing to shift coal, a decision that Lawrence and his successors never forgot.

As well as a trade union leader Lawrence Daly was a passionate Scot who would have been honoured that his memorial service was being held in Dunfermline Abbey, the resting place of Robert the Bruce and William Wallace's mother.

Lawrence Daly

ASLEF supported miners' strike

Gordon Brown attended Commemoration

Lawrence was also a very active anti-war campaigner and joined CND in 1957 and worked tireless against the Vietnam war and joined the Bertrand Russell war crimes tribunal that looked into the atrocities of that conflict.

With his passing not only has the labour and trade union movement lost a true giant of our time - so has international socialism.

COMPANY NEWS

COMPANY COUNCIL ELECTIONS

The following reps have been elected

Southern Company Council

Bro. J. Doyle, Selhurst Branch, Bro. K. Eade, Barnham Branch, Bro. R. Luxford, Three Bridges Branch

Heavy Haul Local Council East 1 Constituency

Bro. S. Read, Knottingley

C2C Company Council

Bro K Langley, Barking Mainline Branch, and Bro M Burrows, Shoeburyness Branch have been elected to the C2C company council

Arriva Trains Wales Company Council

The following members have been elected to the Arriva Trains Wales Company Council:

Brothers R Cash (Chester Branch) Ian Duncan (Crewe Branch) G. Heath (Cardiff Branch) I. Thompson (Treherbert Branch) J. Boreham (Carmarthen Branch)

Chiltern Railways Company Council

Bro. N Dunbar of Stourbridge Branch has been elected to the Chiltern Railways Company Council

First Great Western (West) Company Council

Bro H Rugg of the Portsmouth & IOW Branch and Bro S Newton from Exeter Branch have been elected.

First Great Western (HSS) Company Council

Bro R Samuels, Plymouth Branch has been elected

First Great Western (LTV) Company Council

Bro M Boreham, Paddington Branch has been elected

PAY

Grand Central Trains 2009 pay

Members voted by 80% in favour of a pay offer of 1.25% of forecasted revenue growth, split between a percentage increase in pay and a one off bonus:- 4.08% increase in pay backdated to April 2009, plus the remainder of the 1.25% split between all employees with a capped minimum of £370

East Midlands Trains pay

Members in East Midlands Trains voted in favour of a 2009 Pay Offer consisting of a one year deal of 2.5% increase in basic pay and 2.5% increase to London Allowance both backdated to January 2009.

REST DAY WORKING

ASLEF is prepared to sanction rest day working on

- Northern Rail until 26 September
- LOROL until 29 May 2010,
- Chiltern Railways until 26 December 2009
- (NOD/Off day working) Northern Rail until 31 October 2009
- East Midlands Trains until 31 October 2009
- First Transpennine Express until 31 October 2009
- First Great Western until 31 October 2009
- London Midland until 31 October 2009
- First Capital Connect until 26 December 2009
- (Free Turn Working) Freightliner Intermodal until 28 November 2009

DISPUTES

NXEA – AN HONOURABLE TRUCE

Events at National Express East Anglia moved with speed last month. Following three two-day strikes in August, a revised offer was put to the members without a recommendation, but the ballot revealed that the 800 members balloted had not accepted the deal.
The executive accordingly reinstated the action and a full week of industrial action was announced for the week commencing 21 September.

This led to another round of urgent talks with the company and on 16 September the union wrote to the company's HR director saying that the 2009/10 revised pay offer was acceptable, and that the notified strike action was cancelled.

The executive committee accepted a 'no strings' pay offer of 3.5% over these two years with the proviso that formal company negotiations take place to establish whether there is productivity which would trigger a further 0.5% from September 09.

The union also agreed to rest day working from 21 September 09 until 25 September 10 subject to the agreed joint depot-by-depot review.

The question of the industrial relations difficulties remains, and the union 'reserved the right to initiate further strike action in the event of NX East Anglia's continued abrogation of agreements; imposition of working practices; misapplication of the Collective Bargaining Arrangements or their failure to enter into meaningful restructuring talks, all of which have led to the serious breakdown of industrial relations leading to this dispute'.

In brief, the pay element has been accepted, the action has been suspended and a clear way forward has been put in place to resolve outstanding industrial relations issues.

SPEEDY SOLUTION AFTER UNION ADVISES 30 MPH LIMIT

The executive has withdrawn its advice to drivers to approach the New Barn Occupational Crossing in the Barnham, West Sussex, at no more than 30mph. This follows action by Network Rail to fell trees that caused poor visibility.

Southern Company Council Secretary Roy Luxford told the executive that the problem had been resolved after viewing the site with the local health and safety representative. 'The clearance work has been carried out and we are satisfied that there is no longer a safety hazard,' Roy said.

ASLEF raised the issue with Southern but neither the union nor the company could get a satisfactory response from Network Rail. However only days after ASLEF advised a 30 mph limit Network Rail turned out at the crossing in force, arranging for a farmer to supply a tractor for viewing purposes.

Roy says, 'As a result of our discussions Network Rail has felled five trees and carried out embankment clearance. This has greatly improved the visibility available to tractor drivers using this crossing. Network Rail has also issued the farmer with eight keys for the abloy lock that has been placed on these gates and instructed him on what briefings he needs to give to his staff or contractors using this crossing.'

All those concerned expressed satisfaction with the 'swift and satisfactory resolution'.

DID YOU KNOW?

ASLEF MEMBERS RECEIVE FREE LEGAL SERVICES:

- Free legal advice & representation for any personal injury at or away from work
- Free legal advice & representation on any industrial disease or illness contracted at work
- Free 30 minutes legal advice on non-work issues
- Free Wills & reduced rates for conveyancing
- Employment law advice accessed via your ASLEF District Organiser
- Special terms for clinical negligence
- 24 hour emergency cover for criminal matters arising from your work

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INFORMATION MIGHT BE FREE – BUT IT'S DIFFICULT TO GET HOLD OF!

writes executive committee member **Dave Calfe**

I keep seeing news reports that begin with the words, 'According to figures released under the Freedom of Information Act …' or 'Figures made available under the Freedom of Information Act ..'.

In my experience figures aren't released at all unless they are wrenched and levered from unwilling hands.

This particular saga began after a dispute between the union and Silverlink in November 2007. After a resolution to the dispute was agreed, I wrote to the Department for Transport (DfT) to ask if it had supported Silverlink financially on the days when industrial action was taken, and if, as a result of the dispute any changes had been made to Govia's London Midland franchise (which took over part of Silverlink).

This all arises because of the clause in the Silverlink franchise agreement that says 'the Secretary of State, in his sole discretion, may decide to reimburse or ameliorate net losses of the Franchise Operator arising from industrial action (howsoever caused and of whatever nature)', yes the usual rail franchising principle of win, win for the franchisee. All I wanted to know was if the Secretary of State had passed over public money to the employer to offset the results of our action.

At least I thought my request was clear and uncomplicated. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 says 'any person making a request for information to a public authority is entitled

(a) to be informed in writing by the public authority whether it holds information of the description specified in the request, and

(b) if that is the case, to have that information communicated to him.'

NO FROM THE DEPARTMENT

In April 2008 I received a response from the DfT. In a nut-shell, it said, 'No, we won't tell you.' The Department told me that 'an official' and, later, 'a senior independent official' had both decided not to answer my questions as the information was 'exempt from disclosure as it would be likely to prejudice commercial interests'. It never offered a single reason why this should have been the case.

I could hardly believe it. I only wanted to know

- whether the taxpayer had subsidised the rail company to enable them to overcome the effects of (legal) industrial action; and
- if the new franchise had been altered as a result of the dispute.

By this stage Silverlink didn't have any commercial interests. It had ceased to exist!

The Dft claim that alterations to franchises are commercially confidential but premium payments made or subsidies received by franchises are a matter of public record. They are part of the DfT's own press release when a franchise is placed. I'm sure we all remember when First Great Western had to spend £30 million on improvements to the service as agreed with the Dft, this was judged as not commercially confidential but possibly receiving more public money is? Looks like we're back to the rail franchising principle of win, win!

I couldn't leave it there. As reported in the August 2008 Journal, I decided to take a complaint to the Information Commissioner. This, the law says, is 'an

independent authority set up to promote access to official information'.

THE COMMISSION INVESTIGATES

Shortly after the first anniversary of my complaint about the DfT's secrecy, on 17 August this year, I received a ruling from the Informational Commissioner's Office, with its slogan 'Promoting public access to official information'. It seems that this body found the DfT as helpful as I had. At one point it had to threaten them with the issue of an Information Notice to seek information from the Department.

Anyway, I think I've won. The Commissioner 'has found in favour' of me and ruled that 'the withheld information should be disclosed'. I was provided with an impressive list of sections of the Act that the DfT had failed to meet.

Brilliant! So do I have the answers to the questions I asked? Can I tell you whether the DfT supported Silverlink financially on the strike days back in 2007 and if as a result of the action any changes had been made to the franchise?

Alas no. But, unless the Department appeals – and I wouldn't put it past them – they have to tell me within 35 days what they should have told me freely in March last year.

With a bit of luck, it's information I'll be able to share with you next month.

CIRAS NEW FREEPHONE NUMBER – 0800 4 101 101

CIRAS – the Confidential Incident Reporting and Analysis System for the rail industry – has introduced a new freephone number for its confidential safety reporting service for rail industry staff. The new number is 0800 4 101 101.

The change acknowledged the need for a more memorable number.

LUL DRIVER CLEARED OF BLAME

A driver left badly shaken by a 'near miss' on the London Underground has been cleared of any blame by an inquiry into the incident. The driver, who had just left Ealing Broadway station passed a red signal after being given permission to do so by a signalman who also failed to stop other trains in the area.

The inquiry heard how the driver reported the incident immediately before taking several minutes to compose himself, possibly saving his own life and preventing injury to passengers. The signalman was sacked.

SOLICITORS: THE GOOD NEWS

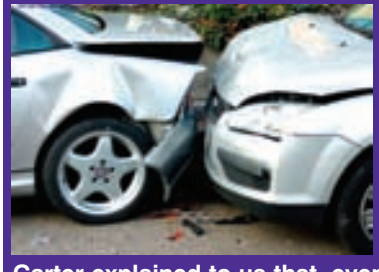
a report from **DAVE VAUGHAN**, *the Secretary of the union's Newton Heath branch*

What's your attitude to solicitors? Do you see the legal profession as a closed world full of jargon, which they deal with so that you don't have to? Do you really know what they can do for you or do you just trust that they're there in the background, ready to pick up the pieces if there's a crisis?

Earlier this summer, Colin Smith, District Organiser for No 3, organised a training day with Thompsons, ASLEF's solicitors, at their Manchester office. Reps and branch committee members from different depots and companies came from around the North West to learn about how Thompsons is keeping us all abreast of changes affecting our working and personal lives.

Nothings stands still for long in the legal world, and our first priority of the day was to learn how legislation has changed concerning industrial tribunals following the Employment Act of 2008. Bernie Wentworth also took us through the ACAS Code of Practice 1 concerning disciplinary and grievance procedures, while Paula Porter dealt with the role that Thompsons can play, in the worst case, should we need support from criminal lawyers. Thompsons also keep up to date with the legal framework of industrial relations that affects the way that the union and our reps can carry out negotiations and representation.

BENEFITS OUTSIDE WORK



But Thompsons are not just there for our work lives. There's much that they can do outside of work. For starters, how many drivers know that they are covered for accidents on their way to or from work? Emma Carter explained to us that, even beyond that, they deal with hundreds of personal injury claims. Emma emphasised that any compensation stays in the drivers pocket, with Thompsons claiming costs quite separately from the settlement. Other invaluable services include a telephone helpline that can offer initial advice on any type of legal issue, a reduced rate conveyancing service and free wills.

A day in an office is not going to turn our reps into legal experts, but what it does is to let us know what resources are available to us through our ASLEF membership. It is very reassuring to see the expertise available to all of us at Thompsons through their national network of offices. The message that came over loud and clear that day was that any member can access that just by referring to the relevant pages in their ASLEF diary. Take some time when you're on a break to have a look at the Thompsons pages to see when, how and why you could contact them. It's worth checking before you need to know! We may joke that it's a very expensive diary, but some day we just might find the information in there makes it worth its weight in gold.

DID YOU KNOW?

ASLEF MEMBERS' FAMILIES ALSO RECEIVE FREE LEGAL COVER:

- Free legal advice and representation for any personal injury away from work, including road traffic accidents
- Free legal advice and representation on any industrial disease or illness contracted away from work
- Reduced rates for wills and conveyancing

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We all deserve a decent retirement

ANDY VINER is standing for election to the London Underground Limited (LUL) Pension Consultative Committee. We asked him what had led him to take an interest in this subject – which to be honest is considered quite dry until the grey hairs outnumber the brown! Andy doesn't agree. This is what he had to say ….

'Defending pension entitlements is one of the most important items on the union agenda. It worries me how easily other groups of workers have given up or bargained away terms and conditions that took their predecessors years of struggle and effort to achieve.

'Businesses all over the UK complain that they can no longer afford decent pensions schemes like defined benefits (ones that guarantee the amount we will finally receive as a pension). Instead, they want cheaper options that leave the worker with no idea how much they'll be worth when they retire. While senior managers' pensions grow to obscene levels, they expect us to buy a ticket for a 'pension lottery'.

'This is being justified in the media in relation to all workers, especially those in the public sector. The decent pensions we have today have not been given to us on a plate. They are not the fruit of the kindness of management's heart. Trade unionists have fought for these rights over generations. Now we are facing a general assault on the hard-fought-for pension schemes we have today.

'The general impression being whipped up in the media is that pension schemes likes ours are not affordable. The aim is to prepare workers everywhere to lay down and accept a financially worst retirement. This is nonsense! It saves companies money at the direct financial expense of their own workers and takes away the future dignity of workers when they retire.

We all deserve a decent retirement. Why should it only be company directors who retire not fearful of making ends meet? We have worked hard in our lives and deserve a retirement lived in comfort.

We have one of the better retirement schemes and I want to see this continue for us all, regardless of whether you've 12 months to go or you're just starting your working life. This applies to all grades – we need to stick together on this issue. If anyone attempts to tamper with our future, we must act together to defend our pensions. All our future plans and hopes are tied up together. No recession or financial argument can ever change that. To that end we must oppose any idea that weakens the pension fund in the long or short term.

Previous generations could rely on the state pension topping up our company pension. Well that's not going to be an option for us. Younger employees are threatened with having no state pension at all by the time they retire. It all goes to prove why our pension scheme is so important not only for ourselves, but also for future employees.

To me, the key point to remember is that the contributions the company makes to the pension fund are our unpaid wages – it's money we are owed. That means we are right to demand that there should never be a company 'pension holiday' and scheme funds must be guaranteed and secure.

I hope I'm elected to the Pension Consultative Committee. It's something I believe in. I'd welcome the chance to put the concerns of employees to the company and I'd make sure they know what's going on. That's why I'm standing.'

UNDERGROUND UPDATE

STAFF ERRORS

A number of drivers have been threatened with discipline for 'staff errors'.

Without any consultation, a group of managers decided that four staff errors in two years should result in discipline. The Train Operators' driving standard has over 100 boxes to tick that could constitute a staff error – from a SPAD to picking up late. Managers even want to include failing to cancel the staff taxi!

We have agreed procedures to deal with relevant issues, be it the SPAD policy, Competence Management or even the disciplinary procedure. We cannot allow managers to make up their own procedures outside what the union has agreed.

SPAD POLICY

The union obtained assurances that existing SPAD policy will be adhered to after the Piccadilly line rewrote it by sending all drivers to case conference for a third SPAD in a two years. Management tried to justify this by claiming an underlying trend of increased SPAD's on the line. The union argued that any trend that resulted in earlier intervention than the fourth SPAD related to the circumstances of the individual and not statistics on the line.

DOUBLE JEOPARDY

Another item resolved was where an item previously dealt with under 'fitness for work' (non disciplinary) was later used under conduct (which is disciplinary) The AAW policy says clearly when an item of non-attendance arises it is dealt with down one route or the other. The caution has been rescinded.

LENGTH OF THE TRAINING DAY

The Victoria line Upgrades JWP were trying to make a Brixton driver add traveling time to training, giving them a day in excess of eight hours. We asserted that a training day is 7 hours 12 minutes including travelling time.

Management agreed that with the exception of pool staff, Brixton drivers should get the time to travel within the training day.

FRANCHISING – HEADS THEY WIN, TAILS THEY WIN

says **Gregor Gall**, professor of industrial relations at the University of Hertfordshire.

POLITICAL commentators often refer to the summer as the silly season. With Parliament in recess and the PM on holiday, there is supposed to be a glut of proper political stories. Consequently, forth and silliness dominate the media agenda, or so the argument goes.

These political commentators got it right this summer but for completely the wrong reason. The silliest story by far was the very serious (and successful) attempt by National Express (NEx) to walk away from its east coast mainline franchise because it was not making enough profits.

When NEx bid for the franchise, it did so in times of economic growth, anticipating oodles of cash was to be made. Then when the economy went into recession, it found passenger revenue went down. Despite cost-cutting, it found it just was not making enough money (despite government subsidy).

Now if NEx had remembered that, as mortgage holders are told, 'the value of your house [here, franchise] can go up as well as down' then it might have said to itself, 'well, you win some, you lose some but never mind, we're still in profit'.

DIFFERENT RULES

Consequently, it would have looked to the better times to make up for its current disappointment. But no! Companies like NEx are so arrogant, greedy and audacious that they will not be bound by public rule and morality.

So, having made sure that the east coast company was a separate one with very limited assets (of £70m), it decided to hand back the franchise knowing full well that if the government sued it for breach of contract, it would only lose £70m.

But it also hoped the government might cave in and give it more subsidy to make up for the lean times it was 'suffering'.

PERFECT COMPETITION – FOR THEM!

All this was not supposed to happen. Our railway system after privatisation was supposed to be an example of neo-liberal perfect competition.

The theory applied to the privatised railways is that the government as franchise seller is able to use competition to get the best price/tender from those that want to make money out of running such a service.

None of those companies that tender would thus be so profit greedy as to offer so little payment (in order to maximise profits) and thus be outbid by others. So the government would get a good price. But it would not just be price that the tenders are based on so quality of service is factored in too.

In theory, the perfect alignment of public and private interests where private industry takes all the risks and the public gets a cheap and efficient service.

Of course, you'd have had to have been on Mars to think this was the case. Us mere earthlings knew it wasn't.

Not only is there no such thing as perfect competition as the strong always dominate but markets cannot be relied upon to deliver public services because markets are driven by greed and public services are driven by need.

So let's look at how this has worked out.

NATURAL MONOPOLIES

The starting point has to be that some areas of the economy like railways but also gas, water and electricity are, what economists call, 'natural monopolies'. Because they require such huge investments to create and run their national networks, they are best run by the state.

And, the reason why they should operate as national networks is because this is the most cost effective way to provide their services which everybody needs throughout and across Britain.

Can you imagine different and competing companies, each with their own separate track lines, trying to provide a service from London to Edinburgh? Duplication would be madness.

Not only this but no private company has the resources to build a national rail network. No company would be so stupid to do so as it would be bankrupt from day one. You only have to remember the Channel Tunnel fiasco to see this.

SPENDING OUR MONEY

But it's another thing entirely to let the state use taxpayers' money to build the network and then sell it off. That squares the circle for the privateers and cuts out their risk, especially when a huge public subsidy is given to them at the taxpayers' expense.

Yet those that tender are so greedy they bid too high to get the franchise forcing them to make cuts and savings to claw back their outlay, with inevitable consequences for staff and services.

Then the NEx case highlights that, as with the banks, the government is actually dependent upon franchise holders to run the service to the extent that it is over a barrel to them.

It was supposed to be the other way round. We have a buyer's, and not a seller's, market.

Add to this the deliberate government choice to create a regulatory environment so lax as to encourage private investment by almost guaranteeing profits and this was a disaster waiting to happen if you're a taxpayer and a member of the travelling public.

As Jim Royle, from The Royle Family, might have said, 'Perfect competition? My arse!'

ASLEF AT TUC CONF

ASLEF played its full part in this year's TUC conference which was held in Liverpool for the first time for 103 years. The conference slogan was 'Jobs, Justice and Climate' – which just about sums up our union's current concerns and objectives.

Apart from our formal work of arguing the union's policies in the hall, we organised a very successful fringe meeting, attended many others and generally raised the profile of the union in a positive way.

The ASLEF delegation was led by National Organiser Simon Weller standing in for general secretary Keith Norman. The ASLEF team pictured here by the conference hall at Liverpool's Albert Dock consisted of Tony Cashman, Alan Donnelly, Simon Weller and Alan Reid.

ASLEF IN THE HALL

In terms of formal business, apart from backing motions from other unions that were in line with the union's policy, ASLEF took the lead in establishing TUC policy on the East Coast line and rail freight.

EAST COAST

Simon Weller argued from the rostrum that the East Coast main line should be kept in public hands as a not-for-profit business, and that National Express, who abandoned the franchise, should be banned from running UK rail services.

Simon Weller gets the ASLEF message about the East Coast line over on the BBC

He pointed out that it was the second time in three years that a franchise owning the vital East Coast service had failed. 'Surely it is now time to learn a few fairly obvious lessons,' he declared. 'If this service is not sold off again it can be run as a publicly owned service, which, as it would not need to make profits for shareholders, would be to the benefit of customers. It would also provide a useful benchmark to compare safety and reliability with the money-orientated franchises.'

The TUC is committed to following this policy and also to arguing that National Express has shown itself not worthy of operating its other two franchises – C2C and the East Anglia service.

RAIL FREIGHT

Tony Cashman took to the rostrum to put ASLEF's arguments for a national strategy to minimise the effects of the recession on rail freight. 'We acknowledge and welcome the government allocating £200 million for the strategic freight network,' he said. 'But the economic downturn means we need even greater efforts.'

Tony pointed out that Network Rail's decision to defer track maintenance and renewals for two years took away 20% of the work of freight companies already hit with lost orders because of the contraction of car and steel production, reduced container traffic and increases to light dues and change liabilities for businesses at UK ports.

'The government said it was committed to put money into preserving jobs to counter the effects of the recession,' he declared. 'Rail freight is a good place to start.'

OTHER TRANSPORT ISSUES

Our delegates backed a TSSA motion saying that subsidies received by rail companies could be better spend than redundancy payments and excessive executive rewards. There was no case for making workers redundant in our industry any more than there was a logical argument for bonuses to rail bosses who had patently not earned them.

OTHER CONFEREN

ASLEF JOINS TOLERANCE VIGIL

The entire TUC Congress stepped out of the hall on the first morning of conference to make a public demonstration of opposition to racism and xenophobia. Delegates observed a five minute silence, many of them holding posters bearing the slogan 'Not in Our Name'. The silence was to reflect the many thousands of racist attacks that go unreported, and the slogan was intended to disassociate themselves from the election of a BNP member of the European Parliament in the city.

The delegates had just heard the mother of Anthony Walker speaking about the 18-year-old's murder in a racist attack in Huyton last year. Gee said, calmly but starkly, 'If my son had been white, he would be alive today.'

TUC leader Brendan Barber

PRIVATISATION: A

ASLEF invited four speakers from a range of backgrounds and experiences to an eve-of-conference fringe meeting to discuss their different experiences of the free-market and privatisation. Each approached the subject with a different approach and slant – but all concluded that the era of privatisation had failed society on a number of levels ...

LOUISE ELLMAN MP – NO SHARED RISKS

Louise recalled the Tory minister Nicholas Ridley defining privatisation's aims. 'He said his dream as a public service minister would be to sign off contracts for the private sector, and go away again.'

She said the results of this can be seen in rail privatisation. The system revolves around a belief that the private sector is good,

FERENCE

NCE BUSINESS

said how appropriate it was that the silent vigil should be taking place just yards away from the waterfront where for years in the eighteenth century 120 ships a year left with cargos of slaves bound for America.

BROWN COMES ...

The Prime Minster addressed the conference and answered questions for half an hour in a rather low-key and largely predictable session. The media were anxious for a row as he told unions he was going to slash public services, while delegates hoped he'd talk about an expansion of the public sector to get the economy on the move. In the event, consummate politician as he is, he did neither.

... WHILE RAIL MINISTERS GO!

Transport campaigners meeting informally outside conference

ASLEF's delegation gets ready for the vigil

calculated that since Labour was elected in 1997, we have had to deal with no less than 34 government ministers for transport. Small wonder that ASLEF has often accused the government of lacking a long-term strategic overview!

VIGIL: an impressive sight as TUC delegates reflect on the victims of hate crime and ponder how to combat it in the future

Colin Smith who chaired the fringe meeting was less than delighted that the start coincided with the kick off of his beloved Everton's match at Fulham. In the event, he was better off in the meeting ....!
Top table speakers were Billy Hayes from the CWU postal union, Louise Ellman MP of the Commons Transport Select Committee, Colin Smith, Mark Dowd the Chair of Merseytravel and Alan Donnelly who stood in for the general secretary

A FAILED EXPERIMENT

the public inefficient, joint ventures enable shared risk, and – most importantly – they provide a ready made excuse for the government's own failures. How often do we hear ministers saying it's not their fault?

But in reality privatisation does not allow the government to shrug and look the other way – as Railtrack showed. Profits were privatised, but the track wasn't maintained!

And private operators don't share the risk. When their profits fall, they seek to renegotiate contracts, they simply give them up. They expect the government to bale them out.

Her solution to the North East main line was not to let the contract again, but to use it as a model of public service and to compare performance with the profit-seekers.

MARK DOWD – CARTELS

Mark Dowd, the the Chair of Merseytravel said that the notion that selling the railways introduced competition into transport was 'almost funny'. 'I have no doubt that bus companies form cartels. It's no coincidence that when contracts end after five years, only two companies bid for them. It's something the Office of Fair Trading must examine in depth.'

Even Thatcher had backed away from privatising rail – that was John Major's doing. 'There was no investment for BR – we should have had funds for electrification decades ago. Our measly 70 miles of high speed rail is a scandal,' he said. 'If BR has been given the fund we give to private companies today, we would have a very different railway.'

He said it was appalling that in his region 142s and Pacers were still running, and demonstrated short term attitudes for investment. 'Instead money leaves the industry and goes to rolling stock companies that could not fail to make vast profits.

BILLY HAYES – NO COMPETITION

Billy said he accepted that there were some things the private sector did well – but for some industries public was the only option. These, he said, included the postal and railway services.

'Major would have privatised Royal Mail but didn't know how to,' Billy declared. 'Instead they came up with 'commercial freedom' – which meant the end of the monopoly and the situation today where private firms cream off profitable areas of mail.'

But private companies were not interested in the manpower-intensive unprofitable parts of the industry, which is delivering to doorsteps. 'They'll pick up mail and sort it, but then they pop it into our system. It's not competition at all. It's all distorted to suit private interests – and at the same time to preventing the public service being profitable.'

He said current Royal Mail managers refused to take up CWU ideas for expanded services with more deliveries, including Sundays and same-day, to make the Post Office the face of government or for a 'people's bank'.

The plan, he said, was to run it down – and sell it off.

ALAN DONNELLY – THE SOCIAL COST

Alan Donnelly took the argument on a further stage when he dwelled on the social costs of the privatisation experience. 'The dog-eat-dog society has had terrible social effects,' he declared as he called for a thorough investigation into its effects.

'Ask yourself why in the late 70s there were hardly any single parents. Society was more cohesive – and Tory attitudes decimated it. Everywhere you look, the privatisation quick-buck society has had effects. Society has crumbled in favour of individuals undercutting each other, eating away at wages and rates of pay. It's led to the 'Me' society.'

Alan said one effect had been job instability. When he began on the railways the people who cleaned engines were at least organised, could expect pensions and had job security and the possibility of advancing in the industry. Now they had no stability and certainly no pension.

'And one thing I want to stress,' he said. 'We keep hearing about how the government may have to put money into pension funds and into the industries. That's wrong. The government has no money: it's our money they are spending – the people's money.

'It should be spent in the way we want it spent.'

HELLISH RUNNING FOR HEAVENLY HOLLY

SINCE 1992, when Craig Ireland joined his local railway on a YTS scheme at the age of just seventeen, this personable 34 year old from Fife has followed whichever piece of track was laid out for him.

After just three months the government scrapped the YTS scheme giving Craig 'my first taste of redundancy on the railways'. Nay problem. Craig spent the next two years in the personnel office before moving again, this time into facilities management, handling contracts on the Overnight Sleepers.

Perhaps it was the romance of these trains that persuaded Craig he would rather drive a train than look after the nuts and bolts. So after training he began to do just that, driving the train from Glasgow to Fife.

Craig admits that he could have branched out, driven a little further a field if he had wanted to but claims that with a new family he was happy enough with his routine. 'Work, drive, home. That's all I wanted,' he says. He sounds almost nostalgic for life as simple as it was then and frankly, who would blame him? Because life took an unexpected and unwanted turn in March last year when his daughter Holly, 4, became ill.

WORRIED FOR HOLLY

'She didn't seem to be especially unwell - just normal unwell,' says Craig. So he and wife Gill called the GP who advised they take little Holly to the hospital, which they did. After examining her, the hospital sent her home, where, says Craig, Holly's condition began to deteriorate. 'She became worse and worse.'

Holly was rushed back to hospital in Kirkcaldy, Fife where she was diagnosed with the particularly virulent Pneumococcal Meningitis virus - and Craig's days of work-drive-home were about to be shattered.

From Kirkcaldy Holly was transferred to Edinburgh's Sick Children's Hospital which would become home not just to her, but to Craig and Gill for the next six months as they watched their healthy happy child change into a little girl 'who couldn't do anything. She lost all her skills, couldn't eat or even swallow'. Throughout this time, during which Holly had to take up to 15 different drugs daily, some as often as four times a day, Craig, and Gill, who had also had a baby boy, Ross, at home, more or less lived in the hospital with Holly, and Craig now devotes much of his time to raising much-needed funds to upgrade the parents' centre and accommodation.

DOING SOMETHING POSITIVE

In June Craig and 55 of his closest friends and colleagues ran a relay of the West Highland Way, a 96 mile stretch of unforgiving terrain that stretches from Fort William to Glasgow.

'We began at four in the afternoon, ran through the night, and finished at 2 pm the next day!' Even Gill took part, although 'there was an easy 3.5 mile run at the end!' Even before Craig's superhuman efforts were featured on Scottish Television, donations began to pour in, and currently stand at around £30,000. Although half of that sum is dedicated to the hospital, a quarter will be given to the High Valley Child Development Centre, which provides rehabilitation for sick children like Holly.

'Not bad considering we were aiming for £20,000,' says Craig. The total has been helped by generous donations from a number of local businesses and of course by Craig's fellow ASLEF members. Robert Wickstead, who is secretary of the union's Edinburgh No 2 branch, raised £1,000, the Glasgow Central branch drummed up £3,000, and the drivers, conductors and train crews at Edinburgh Waverley raised £3,000.

UNEXPECTED GENEROSITY

However it is not just his fellow crew members who have turned out to help this popular driver. Craig tells me about one of his managers at First Scot Rail who ran a 'two peak challenge', raising £1,500. In fact 'management has been excellent'. Not only was Craig allowed to take as much time off work as he needed but he was also offered a range of services, including counseling - which he and his wife declined - in order to get himself back to the 'normality of driving trains' as quickly as possible.

As for Holly, dad continues to look for, and to relish each new physical improvement. His voice breaks as he describes what Holly has lost, but also about the gains that are made every day, because each day brings small improvements.

Holly celebrates her fourth birthday

On the run! Holly, Gill, Craig and Ross.

Holly can hold her head up, crawl, feed herself and use her hands. Most importantly for Craig, 'She has a great smile! She now attends a mainstream nursery where she can copy other children. She leads a relatively normal life and we hope this will continue and improve. It's what we want most for her.' Holly's little brother Ross is, thankfully, in robust health.

STEPPING UP THE PACE

Meanwhile after taking some time off his exertions Craig plans to step-up his fundraising campaign next year by running the Berlin marathon 'with about 25 mates'. He is especially looking forward to 're-hydrating in the bars of Berlin for 24 hours afterwards!'.

And who could blame him? For now, Craig's life has reached a semblance of normality, 'that comes from going into work every day and driving my train'. It's a life that he would be happy to pass onto his children.

'Driving a train remains a great job, something that children still want to do,' he says. For now, however, Craig is simply happy to know that when he gets home from work, both his kids are there to greet him.

● **Interview by Cary Gee**

Craig and friends ready to do it their way – the West Highland Way!

Would you be prepared to be featured in future editions of this column, or know someone who would be a good subject? If you do, please let us know at the ASLEF Journal, 9 Arkwright Road, London NW3 6AB or journal@aslef.org.uk

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WHAT THE UNION WAS DOING 100 AND 50 YEARS AGO

In 1909 the Journal concerned itself with lost sheep, street traders and the Salvation Army, while 50 years on a general election was in the air ....

100 YEARS AGO

Among other things the Stratford branch in October 1909 was getting steamed up about hawkers' street cries that interfered with our members' sleep. Over to the branch secretary ...

"At our branch meeting, held on August 28th, we added two more to our number. These, like sheep, had gone astray, but have now returned to the fold. Brother W.Knights, chairman, presided. Several interesting discussions took place. A resolution was submitted for consideration by one of our members in reference to the various street hawkers, &c., shouting their wares from morning till night (Sundays included), whereby our fraternity at this large locomotive depot could not get their proper rest commensurate with the responsible duties they are called upon to perform in the interests of public safety, be sent to the district councils with a view to this nuisance being stopped, was left over until the mover and seconder could attend in person to support it.

"Salvation Army sweating" was again considered, when it was unanimously decided: "That after receiving further evidence re the above, we again press our E.C. to support the appeal financially, believing it is one that fully deserves our Society's support..... "

50 YEARS AGO

In October 1959 Organising Secretary W.J. Cleaver (how come everyone had two initials in those days?) had a clear point of view that could be summed up in the words 'Never Trust a Tory'!

"I write these notes following the announcement of the date of the General Election. With the knowledge of the tactics employed in past elections it is anticipated that, during the next few weeks, no lack of propaganda will be forthcoming to remind the electorate of the improved standard of living. The persuasive influence of certain sections of the press will be used in an endeavour to convince the people that ability to purchase television sets, washing machines, refrigerators and cars has been made possible by benevolent and socially-conscious employers and an equally benevolent Tory Government. This type of propaganda will have no affect upon the veterans in industry who can vividly recall the unemployment, wage cuts and poverty prevailing under a Tory Government between the two world wars. Neither will it sound convincing to the informed Trade Unionist who is conscious of the industrial agitation and action responsible for improved wages and working conditions, and the gigantic part the Trade Union Movement has played industrially and through the medium of its affiliation to the Labour Party, politically, in connection with the comprehensive Insurance Scheme and other social reforms which have reached the Statute Book. The rejection of the Tories is essential if only to prevent further sabotaging of the progressive legislation introduced by Labour during its term of office."

● *Extracts selected and edited by Jane Pimlott*

IMMINGHAM LOSES TWO RONS

It is my sad duty to report the deaths of two retired Immingham drivers.

Ron May died on 26 June aged 90. Ron Smith died on 21 July at the age of 79. We send out condolences to Ron May's family and Ron Smith's wife and family.

DAVE PATRICK – Reporter – Immingham Branch

MICHAEL J. F. HARRISON – TOO SHORT A RETIREMENT

I am sorry to announce the death of Michael J. F. Harrison on 30 January at the age of 65.

Mick joined British Rail in 1963 as a Shunter at Carr Loco in Doncaster. He moved to the footplate in 1965 and was a Driver's Assistant at Carr Loco until moving to Buxton as a Driver in 1978. He moved to work for RES at York in 1987 before returning to Doncaster in 1989 working for EWS driving the Royal Mail trains.

Mick retired from EWS on ill health grounds in June 2007. Sadly he was not to enjoy his retirement because of the spread of cancer. He was a life-long ASLEF member and may be remembered as liking his cigar.

He leaves behind his widow Pam, sons Mark and Paul and daughter Vicky as well as grand-children and great-grand-children.

PAM HARRISON – wife and mother.

DRIVER GOOCH PASSES ON

It is with great sadness that I report the death of my father Maurice Gooch of the former Parkeston depot who passed away peacefully on 25 August at the age of 80.

Dad joined the railways in 1944 as an engine cleaner at Colchester but a year later – aged just 16 – he passed for acting fireman and started at Parkeston depot in Harwich – his home town.

Dad remained here for the rest of his railway career, having regular firing turns on freight and troop trains to London or Whitemoor. In 1947 he was called up into the Army Royal Engineers at Longmoor and after training was posted to Germany.

He travelled on the boat train to Harwich – driven by his own father – and boarded the ship for Holland.

When he was de-mobbed he went back to BR and to his regular drivers and loco – No 1149.

In the early 'fifties my dad was the first fireman to work the new Britannia loco on the 'Hook' boat train to Harwich. He passed for driver in 1953 but in the early 1960s was at Ilford school learning all the diesels.

Soon after this he was the driver on the up 'Scandinavian' boat train with King Frederick of Denmark aboard. On arrival at London the Embassy official thanked Dad for a smooth and safe journey and gave him £2, and his fireman £1!

Dad was well known at the depot for his poetry as he would write poetic stories of his fellow workmates who had had 'misdemeanours'. It was all taken in the spirit in which it was intended.

Dad retired in 1991 after ill health after more than 46 years on the footplate. In retirement he enjoyed playing the organ, reading and sea fishing. He later joined Colchester's model engineers group along with other former Parkeston drivers where he was back driving steam locos – albeit at a smaller gauge. He continued to enjoy all the banter and mickey-taking. Dad also loved being around his two grand-daughters and taking them with my mum for trips out.

My family thank all his former workmates and friends for all the kindness and support shown to us.

STEPHEN GOOCH – Driver – Freightliner Ipswich

TREASURE – A TREASURE INDEED

It is with great sadness that I write this obituary about Gary Treasure (1956 – 2009), a fellow driver on C2C and my right-hand man on Barking Mainline LDC, who passed away suddenly on 19 August. The shock felt by everyone on that day will be remembered forever.

Gary started his railway career at Stratford Depot as a second man in June 1973. He moved to Ripple Lane Depot in 1980 where he became a driver. While he was here, Gary's humour became legendary. This sense of humour traveled with Gary to East Ham Depot in 1993 when Ripple Land Depot closed. Be it playing practical jokes at four in the morning when the rest of us could only think of a cuppa, or one-liners at ten in the evening, Gary was always full of life in the mess room.

After working with Gary on the LDC, I came to realise that he was also a kind, thoughtful and intelligent man who took pride in his union work.

Gary's funeral was held on 28 August 2009 and over a hundred people attended to pay their last respects to a character we will all miss, especially his wife and son. Gary – the mess room will never be the same. Rest in Peace.

P.S. Do you want to buy a chicken?

MARK DANIELS – Barking Mainline LDC

JOHN LANGSTONE – KNOWN AS 'CHUFF'

We are sorry to pass on the news of the death of ex Saltley Driver John Langstone on 19 June at the age of 64. The sad information was passed to us by retired Driver Don Magson who also helped with some details for this short obituary.

John Langstone was born on 24 September 1944 and after school in Tyseley he joined the railway there. When Tyseley closed in the 70s he moved to Saltley. John was known as 'Chuff' and he had deep affection for his motorbikes, rugby and Birmingham City football club. He was a happy, easy-going and popular guy.

John retired on ill-health from Tyseley factory. He will be sadly missed by both retired and active railway staff and friends.

ADRIAN HARNETT – Secretary - Saltley Branch

GARY JOHN TONY WARE – A POPULAR MAN

It is with deep regret that I have to report the death of Retired Driver Tony Ware at Epsom aged 80 years.

Tony was appointed driver at Epsom in 1960 after spending his earlier days as a Fireman at Ramsgate. He retired in 1993. He was very popular with all his colleagues on the Southern as he was so easy to get on with and with his warm sense of humour, he had many friends.

There are countless people who were grateful to him for his help and advice with his expert knowledge of motor mechanics, and Tony helped them all. He spent many years as LDC secretary at Epsom and he also held the position of leading driver. Our thoughts go out to Tony's wife Dean, daughter Jackie and family.

RON THOMAS - Retired Section

GS VISITS EAST FINCHLEY

AT our East Finchley/Golders Green August Branch meeting we were honoured to be invited to Arkwright Road to meet general secretary Keith Norman who presented retirement mementos to drivers Richard ('Dot') Cotton and Ray Tokely. Keith presented tankards and framed certificates as a mark of thanks for their service and hard work.

Richard Cotton has been a member for 35 years and has always been a colourful and much loved driver who has worked all his career at East Finchley. He started as a boy but will leave as a man!

Ray has been a member for 27 years and can now look forward to relaxing and groovin' to his favourite 60's and 70's psyche rock bands - Hawkwind will now get a proper airing.

On hand at the meeting was organiser Steve Grant who gave an update on the latest LUL pay negotiations. A big vote of thanks must go to Keith Norman for generous hospitality.

Alan Powell - Branch Chairman

The GS does the honours at East Finchley

LIVERPOOL SAFETY SEMINAR: 17 reps turned out for this important seminar

LIVERPOOL CONCENTRATES ON SAFETY

LAST month District Organiser Colin Smith and I organised a highly successful Safety Seminar in Liverpool, reports **Alan Moss**. I think we achieved our aim of giving our health and safety representatives valuable education, enhancing their confidence and abilities and enabling them to represent their colleagues in a diligent and professional manner.

The 17 safety reps who attended - along with Sister Allyson Jones from the ASLEF Women's Committee and Brother Andy Morgan, a Learner Representative from Merseyrail – heard a wealth of stimulating guest speakers.

The first of these was Dr Mervyn Thomas, an HMRI Inspector from the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) who gave useful insights into the work of the Inspectors. His presence was invaluable as it set the tone for the whole event. His Principal Inspector, Gerald Kerr, concentrated on the structure of the HMRI. After they had willingly fielded questions, Sister Allyson Jones from the ASLEF Women's Committee, gave a well-received presentation.

The afternoon session was opened by John Bamford from the Greater Manchester Hazards Centre. As well as explaining more about Hazards' work, John offered sound advice on the scope and role of safety representatives.

I briefed colleagues on the SRSC Regs (The Brown Book), the inherent rights of representatives, statutory rights of employers and facilities for safety representatives and finally we were able to give advice on specific issues that delegates brought to the group from their home depots. After this event's overwhelming success, we are already planning the next one!

Thanks are due to Colin Smith for his unswerving support, to all those who attended the seminar and to everyone who contributed to the total of £87.20 raised for a 'Shoeboxes for Troops' appeal.

TOP DAY AT NEWTON HEATH We had a superb turn out at the Millgate Failsworth in July, marking 24 years of branch reunions since the shed closure. With retired colleagues and guests all enjoying not only the weather but the excellent way in which retired people meet up with ex-colleagues form different TOCs who at some time passed through Newton Heath plus the present depot men who came along to support this popular event.

Our thanks to the Branch Committee and Mike Wood for making all the arrangements and to the present members of the Manchester Victoria 105 club.

Once more, our special thanks. Well done, lads!

S. Black – RMS – Newton Heath

BEDFORD At the end of April the Bedford Depot – both active and retired members – as well as many members from other depots and union, met at the RAFA Club to celebrate the retirement of four long-serving Bedford ASLEF drivers. Their total length of service adds up to over a century and a half on the footplate.

Brothers Mick Ginn, Glenn Roddis, Bob Munday and John Golder are the men in question – but sadly John was on holiday and missed the event. Well over 100 people turned up to say farewell to the four (most of them to make sure Glenn really does go!).

A presentation made to the threesome, was the highlight of the evening. A very thoughtful idea led to each being presented with a mounted model of the first engine they drove in service in a stylish glass case.

Mick's engine was a Black Five steamer, Glenn's a Green BR Class 25 diesel loco and Bob's a Blue BR Class 25 diesel loco. They were also presented with framed ASLEF retirement certificates and partners were given bouquets of flowers.

Only the most hardened Blue shift drivers were left when the RAFA club finally shut up shop!

It's always sad to see such experience leave the industry in one go. However we hope to see them all again – along with many others – at the Annual Bedford Social and Welfare Club's 'Old Boys Do' on Saturday 17 October at the Cutler Hammer Club in Kempston.

On behalf of the branch and everyone on First Capital Connect, I would like to wish Mick, Glenn, Bob and John all the very best for a long, happy and healthy retirement.

Martin Barter – Secretary – Bedford Branch

Three Musketeers - Mick Ginn, Glenn Roddis and Bob Munday at the Bedford function

RETURN OF THE HAMDEN BOYS

WHO are the Hamden Boys? They're former Kings Cross Drivers who, when they were all Firemen, were billeted in the Hamden Club in Summers Town in London's Camden London.

I'm pleased to report they're all going strong – but I'm having to issue John Stannard with a Form One for being absent at our last reunion.

Those in attendance were (left to right)

- Michael Lockhart who started at Kings Lynn on 17 August 1942 and transferred to Kings Cross in 1954
- Alan Batty who started at Tuxford on 25 January 1950 and transferred to Kings Cross in February 1952
- Brian ('Blondie') Aldrich who, after starting at Norwich in April 1948, came on loan to Kings Cross in 1949 and transferred into a regular position in August 1952.
- John Stannard who started at Hatfield in September 1948, transferred to Kings Cross in Oct 1953 and went into control in 1960.
- Len ('Judge') Moor who started at Cambridge in 1949, transferred to Kings Cross May 1950 and again later went into control.
- Jim Anderson who started at Aberdeen May 1948, came to Kings Cross on loan February 1950 and transferred into a regular position in February 1953.

Peter Smith – Reporter - Kings Cross Branch

GANGING UP IN TONBRIDGE

The Tonbridge gang

THIS year's Tonbridge Gang Show had two ex-Betshanger miners as guests at an event organised by Tony Holland, Dave Weddle and 'the Ladies'.

Tony Holland's health has been a matter of concern but happily his condition is now stable. He had been concerned that this could have been the final Tonbridge reunion but we're optimistic that we'll be back in the Legion in 2010.

Finally don't forget to support the raffle. Long arms and short pockets are needed!

Peter Smith – Reporter - RMS

LONDON BRIDGE IS STANDING UP

AT our branch meeting in July we presented 20 and 30 year's long service badges to Drivers G. Dartnel and Sammy Rao respectively.

Our regional organiser (and our branch chair) Graham Morris made the presentations and it was good to see our complete Company Council in attendance. It was an achievement in its own right to get all three in the same room at the same time (which I should perhaps explain is my little joke).

The London Bridge branch has recently undergone a bit of a resurrection from being fairly inactive to becoming a (sort of) well attended branch with a good standard of debate. We affilliated to the National Pensioners Convention (NPC) this year and we advertise their paper at the depot and raise their points at our meetings.

As a driver of 20 years, I'm 'old school' on my politics. My dad was a docker in Scotland. I remember clearly him telling me of the days before the dockers' union when the men had to queue up at the gates in the rain to be asked, 'Who wants work today?' – and they had to put their hands up! So I know at first hand the importance of being a union member and activist.

I encourage new guys to 'look back' and see what being in the union means. It's about fighting for our right to work safely and earn a decent living and to have the pressure of anti-social working, which affects our families as well as ourselves, recognised. How many bosses do we see getting home at three in the morning?

So let's hope that future members fight the good fight for us when we are pensioners. Hopefully one day we will all be pensioners who are able to look back with pride and say, 'When I was in ASLEF I fought the fight and we got to retire in dignity. It's no more than we deserve.'

Graeme Baxter – Secretary – London Bridge

Dartnel picks up his badge

Well done, Sammy! There's thirty years under that belt!

Taking the air! Colin Smith, Mike Hart, Mick Kelly, Paul Winstanley and Jim Hopkins

A GATHERING OF GREATS OF LONGSIGHT BRANCH!

LONGSIGHT Branch was honoured to pay homage to a number of its brothers over a fortnight in August.

Before the short hop from Manchester to Stalybridge, District Organiser Colin Smith, Company Council rep Lee Stevenson and I had lunch with our brother, friend and branch secretary Fred Clarke who is recovering from being extremely ill. Everyone at Longsight Branch wishes Fred the very best.

We then moved on to the famous Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar on the outskirts of Manchester. Originally opened in 1885 it is a wonderful venue with hospitable publicans, excellent ales, tasty pies and a huge amount of railway memorabilia.

A remarkable number of colleagues turned up to give a special send off and their best wishes to two of Longsight's finest drivers Mike Hart and Paul Winstanley.

Mike started at Longsight in 1960 as a labourer. Apart from a brief spell at Newton Heath, he was a Longsight man until his retirement. He's one of our 'regulars' in the West Coast Drivers Aviation Group, a real character who's always up for a laugh.

Paul began as a cleaner at Newton Health in 1961, became a fireman in 1962 and passed out as a Driver in 1976. In 1982 he moved to Longsight where he remained until retirement. As well as being a respected member of the fraternity, Paul was also a diligent representative and ambassador for the Enginemans Assurance Fund

At the same event Colin Smith presented a 45 year badge to one of Longsight's finest, Brother Mick Kelly, a stalwart of our branch and an efficient and effective LLC rep for many years. I'd like to thank Mick personally for the knowledge and guidance he gave me when I worked in parallel with him.

CENTENARIAN STAN

A FEW weeks later a large number of ASLEF members gathered to pay tribute to a real gentleman, Stan, who looked extremely sprightly for his 100 years. Stan started in 1924 as a fireman at Stockport Depot and finished as a Traction Inspection at Longsight in 1974. District Organiser Colin Smith gave an inspired speech and presented Stan with a wonderful ASLEF inscribed medallion and a limited branch badge, while Stan's family were handed bouquets.

Stan told us when he was a Traction Inspector he never asked anyone to do anything he wouldn't do himself. It is advice many in the industry today would do well to heed. Thanks to Brother Colin Allsobrook for helping arrange the event along with Albert Taylor, to Colin for making the presentations, to our hosts and to everyone who came along.

Truly we are 'Proud To Be Union'.

Alan Moss - Longsight Branch

District Organiser Colin Smith (left) with Colin Allsobrook, Albert Taylor and Stan Daniels

UPCOMING EVENTS

NATIONAL FORUM 2009.

This year's National Forum will be held on 28-29 November at Jurys Inn in Birmingham.

All members are warmly invited to attend.

Have your say on the industrial, political and organisation direction of your trade union for the year ahead.

Hear from Keith Norman, general secretary, quiz the Executive Committee and exchange ideas with fellow members in a friendly and fraternal setting.

The price of £35, includes a room on Saturday night, all meals and a chance to relax with fellow members and enjoy the entertainment at Saturday's reception.

Events include a special workshop session on the law and how ASLEF can work with it.

For further information or if you would like to attend please contact Simon Weller, National organiser, on 07939 173042 /email: sweller@aslef.org.uk, or Sarah Laurie on 020 7317 8606 / email: sarah.laurie@aslef.org.uk.

Details can also be downloaded from www.aslef.org.uk

CRICKLEWOOD REUNION

The next Cricklewood reunion will be held at the RAFA Club in Ashburnham Road in Bedford from 11.30 onwards on Friday 23 October. For further information contact Grahame Nash in Bristol or Bob Hodson in Wolverhampton.

GATESHEAD AND NEWCASTLE REUNION

The next Gateshead and Newcastle Reunion will be held on Thursday 12 November in the Gateshead Railway Club from 1300.

For further information contact Mark Newton on 078 76578894

MARYLEBONE REUNION

The next Marylebone Branch Reunion will take place on Friday 16 October at the Hobgoblin pub in Balcombe Street. It is a two minute walk from Marylebone Station (just turn left at Dorset Square). All ASLEF members are welcome to the event which will take place from 1600. We hope to see you there. There will be a free buffet. Any queries contact Ian Neeve.

19 OCTOBER LEARNING FESTIVAL AT KINGS CROSS

ASLEF learner reps in National Express East Coast are organising an event at Kings Cross on 19 October to mark the National Festival of Learning.

Various educational and community organisations have been invited to have stalls where they can inform staff and commuters what they do. As it's a family festival the emphasis will be on learning for pleasure and fun, with plenty of freebies and prizes.

Among those who have accepted invitations are the Working Men's College (for men and women, incidentally!), the Open University and Birkbeck College. We are hoping local schools and children of NXEC staff will be able to come along.

OTHER LEARNING EVENTS

NXEC Union Learning reps are holding an event in Leeds on the 22 Oct and there will be events at SWT, NXEA,LOROL, and LMT during the National Festival of Learning which runs from 10th – 30th October. No details are available but they will appear on the union website when they are finalised.

24 OCTOBER YORK RES REUNION

The tenth York RES traincrew reunion will take place on Sat 24 October at York Railway Institute bar from 1900 - 2300 hrs. Staff from all grades and companies who wish to see old friends are welcome to attend.

Buffet laid on as usual. See you there. Further details from Brian Wallace,

RMS York Branch.

YOU TELL US

These are the pages where you talk to us. We welcome your letters, either by mail to the Journal at 9 Arkwright Road London NW3 6AB or by email to journal@aslef.org.uk

Because of our space constraints, please try to keep your contributions as short as you can.

This month we continue our STAR LETTER feature. The immensely lucky winner will pocket a rich range of ASLEF regalia!

WELL DONE FOR ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT

EVER since I have been a driver on Southeastern we had had a process where a Driver who has been off work sick for up to 7 days has had to supply the company with a doctor's certificate – which cost the driver £12 - to receive his salary.

Ever since this was implemented with the Drivers' Restructuring Initiative in 1997, the vast majority of Drivers have hated it and our Branches have always put its removal on our wish list to the Drivers Company Council in the hope that we'd be allowed to self-certificate.

Drivers do eventually receive their salary - but only once a Doctor's certificate has been supplied to management. Problems arise when a doctor will not supply a certificate even though, to receive our salary, drivers are trying to pay.

I would like to congratulate my colleagues on Southeastern Drivers Company Council – Brothers Peter Rowland, Perry Calvert and Joe Holmes - who have taken this contentious item and dealt with it outside any Pay and Conditions talks. Although the item has not been finalised, we are assured the change we want will be introduced later this year.

This type of negotiations (as this is part of our conditions of service) with management where Drivers have always given something up to receive something in return, is now changing - and this makes me proud to be an ASLEF member.

I have to say it's not the first time this has been done as this same DCC made changes to the Southeastern Commentary Driving Policy about 26 months ago, which now means Drivers do not have to Commentary Drive every minute of the day!

Keep up the good work, lads.

Malcolm Hirst – Driver – Grove Park

THANKS, STEVE

I HAVE been suspended from driving duties since September 2009 following an incident on the line whilst driving with First Great Western. I'm pleased to report that I am returning to driving duties but I would like to express my thanks to Steve Williams of Westbury depot for his continued support and professional representation throughout the investigation.

Mark Elvey – Driver – Gloucester

ANY NEW LINE CRICKET MEN?

ARE there any members of the New Line Cricket Club amongst the readers of the Journal? If so I would love to hear from them. Over the years there must have been dozens of players and although I have kept in touch with several through the monthly Woking club meetings there are still many more who have dropped off the radar.

I know Chris Gibbs and Alistair Cowper-Johnson have gone on to greater things in the Rail Industry. Members might remember my wife Jean's infamous fruit cake - our secret weapon!

After taking early retirement from Wimbledon Park we returned to the Isle of Wight and now live in Ryde. If anybody would like to contact me an email to jeandrudge@talktalk.net would be very welcome.

Terry Drudge - ex Effingham Junction and Wimbledon Park E.M.U.T

BACK ON THE FOOTPLATE – THANKS TO ASLEF

I AM writing to express my immeasurable gratitude to everyone who was involved in securing my reinstatement to the driving grade after I was reduced following an operational incident.

Firstly, thanks must go to District Organiser Kevin Lindsay for his unparalleled representation at the hearing and appeal, and to EC Member Hugh Bradley for attending our branch meeting at such short notice, for listening to the branch and for his support.

I would also like to thank Branch Secretary, Grant Murchie for dealing with all the other branches and for keeping me up to date with developments. To my colleagues at Perth branch, I thank them all for their support and for their kind words when I was at a low point, and when the time came, for passing the resolution to support me.

I would also like to thank every branch in District 2 that sent resolutions in support of the Perth branch resolution. I would like to mention each branch individually but won't in case I omit one by mistake. However, I can never praise the other branches highly enough for their support.

Twelve months ago I didn't know any train drivers. Today I am overwhelmed by the solidarity shown to me by people who were complete strangers, but who stood shoulder to shoulder with me because I am in ASLEF.

To everyone, I thank you all.

S Cumming – Driver

BUILD A LEFT ALTERNATIVE

NOW that the dust has settled on the European elections, I would like to comment on the May edition of the Journal, and circular 303/2009, both of which urged support for Labour candidates.

As the union is still affiliated to New Labour, I can understand that policy. However, surely it is more

Change of address form

Name.....

Address.....

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Phone.....

Branch.....

Membership No.....

Employer.....

important to use the political funds of the union to support candidates whose policies best serve the interests of ASLEF members.

In no way can that equate to New Labour. The party which was born out of the trade union movement, is a pale shadow of its former self; its MPs are usually inadequate and most disturbing is its shift to the Right.

Labour has ceased to be the party of the common people. Its policies in many cases are further to the Right than Thatcher's.

Just look at a few: privatisation of the Post Office, no repeal of anti-union laws, decimation of British industry, internal markets in the NHS, no free dental care – and certainly no intention of nationalising the railways.

New Labour has courted 'middle England' to the extent that it has effectively abandoned its traditional support along with its socialist principles. All parties have highs and lows but there is no way back for New Labour this time. We're seeing its death throes.

If our union has its members interests at heart it's time to dump New Labour and involve ourselves in building a new left alternative alliance.

John Metcalfe – Carlisle

SOUTHERN COUNCIL GRATITUDE

WE would like to place on record our sincere thanks for the overwhelming support we received in our re-election to Southern driver's company council.

Roy Luxford, Kevin Eade and John Doyle

KINDNESS AT THE CROSS

Please can I use the letters page to say a big 'thank you' to the Kings Cross branch for its kind donation/sponsorship of £100 for my charity trek along Hadrian's Wall in June.

I completed the trek to raise funds for Great Ormond Street Hospital where my son has been an out-patient for most of his life, and who underwent an operation nearly two years ago to remedy his leg discrepancy.

A party of 36 like-minded strangers with three Ormond Street workers and three guides walked 25 miles over 2 days, along some very beautiful, hilly terrain for this worthy cause.

I personally raised £1,000 for GOSHCC with large donations from FIRST Group and ASLEF. I'm very grateful – it's a great cause.

Many thanks.

Richard Sullivan – Driver - FCC Kings Cross

A NIGHTMARE THAT DOESN'T GO AWAY

ALTHOUGH I'm not a driver I used to hold a trainer's cab pass and I've been reading online issues of the Journal. I was particularly struck by the driver who talked about his trauma after a fatality in this year's January edition.

Many years ago on the East Suffolk line, the 'siggy' called us on the RETB radio to tell us the police were at a level crossing near Beccles Weston and that there was a child on the line. We were close to the crossing but couldn't see it. The driver applied the vacuum brake, we rounded a curve and there was the child on the sleeper ends.

I had nightmares about that child for weeks, and I still do on occasions, watching him grow bigger and bigger as we get nearer.

I'm still convinced that without that radio call we would have hit him, and if we had I don't know how I would have coped. My sympathy goes out to every driver who has to deal with an incident like this. One near miss in 30 years as a railway man was quite enough for me.

Glyn Calvert - Enfield

SLIDING SCALE AFTER INCIDENT

I HAVE been a driver for 23 years and I've never felt so disillusioned as I do now. On the 14 April last year I was blighted by my fifth fatality, leading to an end to my main line driving. It was a choice I took with a heavy heart as I've enjoyed my job as main line driver from day one. I realised however that I can no longer subject myself, my family and close friends to my mood swings and change of character following these fatalities.

But I feel let down by ASLEF and my local reps as I fight to keep my full drivers' rate of pay instead of the proposed sliding scale. Scotrail management have shown no compassion. Only today I was told to take a lieu day to attend a half-hour DWP medical revue. My rep says because it was not a Scotrail medical they are not obliged to cover my job. Yet the medical was for industrial injuries caused by the fatality while working for Scotrail.

Andy Bentley – Driver – Corkerhill, Glasgow

THE NXEA STRIKE

No one wants to go on strike,

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

To advertise in the ASLEF Journal please contact Sarah Francis on 020 7317 8600 or sfrancis@aslef.org.uk

DRIVER COLLECTS BR33056 SERIES TRAINCREW / DRIVER MANUALS. Contact Lee on 07919127972 or e-mail lippydavies@blueyonder.co.uk

GREAT WESTERN CLASS 180 BADGE High quality enamel badges, only 100 produced, individually numbered. Made to commemorate the short-lived Class 180 with Great Western. £5 each, £1 p&p. Please contact Greg: 07930-419850 or email: intercityexpress125@hotmail.co.uk

CITY OF LONDON BADGES, one 10-year and one depot badge. Depot badges are numbered 1-150. There are only 150 of each. Price £5 plus £1 p&p. All profits to City of London branch funds to acquire a branch banner. Further information or orders to Colin Dawson 01689 849 543 or 22 Hutchison Road, New Addington, Croydon, Surrey CR0 0BD.

LONGSIGHT BRANCH has produced a Commemorative Badge Limited to 500 Numbered Copies. They are available for £5.00 plus £1 p&p from the Branch Secretary Fred Clarke at 80 Brookfield Avenue, Poynton, Stockport, Cheshire, SK12 1JE. Please make cheques payable to F. Clarke.

ASLEF TRAIN DRIVER collects ASLEF/railway badges, signs, shed plates, signalling items, etc. Phone Mark on 01562 746537 or (mobile) 07789301551

DIESEL HYDRAULIC ITEMS wanted by collector. Anything considered, especially speedos, power handles etc. Rob 01822 834 150

LIMITED RAMSGATE ASLEF BADGE is now available in a limited edition of 100 individually numbered badges struck to commemorate the restoration and re-naming of ex Ramsgate loco Manston. They are £5.00 each with first class recorded delivery at £1.50. For further details either email asleframsgate@hotmail.co.uk or phone Ramsgate branch secretary Dave Bull on 07941142163

FIRST EDITION of the only recognised Tram/Light Rail ASLEF Branch. CROYDON TRAM/LIGHT RAIL No1 (270)
Badge cost £5 each with £1 P&P . Cheques payable to: "CTLRNo1" and sent to David Brinkworth, 6 Peregrine Court, 47 Albemarle Road, Beckenham, BR3 5HL or via Paypal david@brinkworth.me.uk

but in the case of the NXEA it was one that was seen as the final straw and necessary.

We sometimes read about how trade unions take industrial action as the first weapon to achieve their goals. ASLEF is not like this. We only ballot the membership for industrial action when it is necessary and only after a very long, testing and exhaustive route to try and reach a negotiated agreement.

The solidarity shown by the membership is a credit to them. We should also remember that the union is not the only one that passengers should blame for the action - management must bear the brunt for creating the situation.

ASLEF members should be proud to belong to such a unique union. Although small in size it is mighty in the fight for justice for footplate grades.

Non-members should consider their position, stop being users and become supporters of ASLEF, the dedicated footplate union.

Bill Dale – RMS - Chingford Branch

FLAM PRONOUNCED FLOM

THROUGH your columns I would like to advise members thinking of travelling to Norway that the 'Flam line' that runs from Myrdal (on the Oslo to Bergen line) to Flam is no longer part of the national rail network in regards to fares and does not accept any form of FIP travel (free coupons/reduced rate travel). It is run by the local tourist authority. Despite that, the infrastructure responsibility is still the Norwegian equivalent of Network Rail and the Rolling Stock and Traincrew are supplied by the NSB. Further details on this amazing line which climbs 863 metres (approx 2,800 feet) in 20kms (approx 12.5 miles) can be found on their website - www.flaamsbana.no/eng.

I visited this line in August whilst on a cruise from Harwich (which incidentally started on one on the last of the strike Fridays, so getting to Harwich that day by train involved a taxi from Manningtree!).

Secondly, this union is now listed on the Friends Reunited website under 'Workplaces' and the title is 'Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers & Firemen (Asle&f), London, NW. Maybe other members might like to join. (Perhaps someone at head office could send them our logo to make it complete?).

David Lean – Driver - Euston

ENJOYABLE HEAD OFFICE VISIT

ON behalf of the Newton Heath branch I wish to express our gratitude for the warm welcome we received on our visit to Arkwright Road on 7 Sept.

After discussing various topics with the general secretary in his office we enjoyed a tour of our union's head office and were intrigued to learn about the history of the building as well as enjoying a potted history of ASLEF.

The various historic items on display throughout Arkwright Road, especially the numerous banners on display, really instil you with a sense of pride which I may add has given our branch a new sense of direction!

Our visit has ignited discussion on our branch's sense of identity. We now feel branch badges and maybe a banner are in order!

I must admit, however, that my memory of events after 6 o'clock are a little blurred - but I'm not complaining as the food, drink and more importantly the company was first rate.

A special thanks must go to the ASLEF president Alan Donnelly. He played a great part in achieving the hang-over from which I am still suffering two days later!

Finally I would like to say to all branches across the country, 'If the opportunity arises to visit Arkwright Road, you should take it. You won't be disappointed.'

Thanks again.

Steve Hill – Newton Heath Branch

CONGRATULATION MARZ

CONGRATULATIONS to Marz Colombini following his election to the Executive Committee. The election was, I believe, fought vigorously but fairly by all candidates, avoiding dirty tricks or personal attacks.

Although I'm obviously disappointed to have been an unsuccessful candidate I'm sure Brother Colombini will be a strong voice on the ruling body of our great union. My commiserations also to Brother Sheehan.

I look forward, as do my fellow ASLEF representatives and activists I am sure, to working in the spirit of openness, transparency and democracy that are the watch-words of successful and progressive trade unionism.

Karl Davis – West Sussex

GETTING ACTIVE IN THE UNION

WHEN I joined the rail industry I'd always intended to join a union, but I didn't know which one. The decision was made easy after Nick Whitehead visited the training school and spoke about the support and work ASLEF does for the membership.

For seven years I was happy to attend branch meetings and support the union. Then, in 2007, I was co-opted onto the LDC. Another union challenged for the seat in the subsequent election, but ASLEF retained the seat. I felt it was a demonstration that our train drivers know we are the only union that can fully represent train drivers.

Becoming active in ASLEF has shown me how our union works in a democratic way, and there is always some experienced person to offer advice, debate, education and guidance.

I don't understand why some drivers don't want to be in the train drivers' union. I'm proud to be part of ASLEF, proud of my achievements and proud to serve the membership.

Beverley Hickling - Northern Rail East - Leeds

GREETING FROM DOWN UNDER DRIVER

My name is Norm Callaghan and I was an ASLEF member from 1964 to 1971, when I emigrated to New Zealand. In 1977 I became a driver in NZ, joining their union, the Engine Drivers, Fireman and Cleaners Association (EFCA). This later became the Locomotive Engineers Association.

In 2002 I left NZ and now drive trains in Western Australia. I'm now a member of the Rail Tram and Bus Union, the RTBU.

Two English drivers have recently arrived in my depot, Nick Clark from Ferry Hill and John Lillie from Carlisle.

Reading the ASLEF Loco Journal on-line as I do, I see we all have the same problems. My interest in union affairs continues, fostered by being in ASLEF all those years ago.

All the best to those who remember Norm Callaghan – formerly of Lostock Hall (1963-1968) Preston SOP (1968–1971).

Oz Norm still on the footplate

ASLEF'S legal services – your rights for their wrongs!

FREE LEGAL ADVICE ASLEF also provides first class free legal advice – both for members and for their dependents. In the first six months of this year we have secured £1,442,369 in compensation claims! Call the helpline on 0808 100 8009

EMERGENCIES If you are an ASLEF member who is arrested or being interviewed by the police and need legal assistance – day or night – you can call the members' Emergency Hotline on 0800 587 7530.

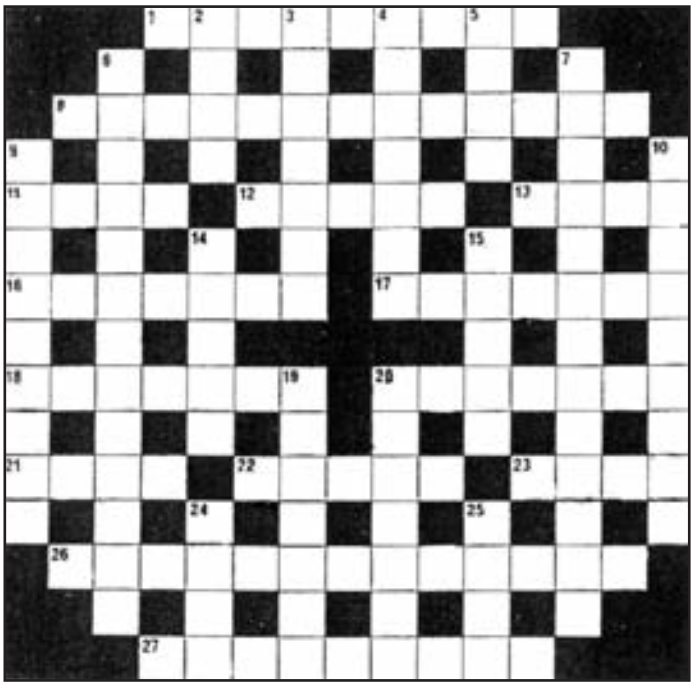
SACKINGS OR OTHER PROBLEMS AT WORK Harassment, discrimination or bullying? If your local, branch or district representative is unavailable, call the Industrial Relations department at union headquarters (020 7317 8600) or email info@aslef.org.uk

ASLEF *more than just a union*

THOMPSONS SOLICITORS

Prize Crossword No. 42

set by TLC



CLUES ACROSS

1 London Borough (9)
8 Pendolinos for instance (7,6)
11 Not shut (4)
12 Repeated rhythmic phrase, used by Monks at prayer (5)
13 Endorse or ratify a passport (4)
16 Nickname for Everton Football club (7)
17 Strike the object ball with this in Snooker (3-4)
18 Sharp pointed objects used in sewing (7)
20 He serves you at the Bank (7)
21 Part of the Armed forces (4)
22 Sending a message on the computer (1-4)
23 Run away! (4)
24 Having a very good nights rest! (5,4,1,3)
27 Warm place to relax whilst waiting for the train (9)

CLUES DOWN

2 Small wingless insects living in colonies (4)
3 Delivered by boxers (7)
4 Ship which sank on maiden voyage (7)
5 Sir --- Sugar, businessman and entrepreneur (4)
6 Interminable journey (4,5,4)
7 A very rare person or event (3,2,1,7)
9 London soccer team (9)
10 Method of buying from a catalogue (4,5)
14 '----- on wheels' food for pensioners (5)
15 Sumptuous banquet (5)
19 Mogadishu is the capital of this African country (7)
20 Type of stony residue from burnt fuel (7)
24 Churches ring one to summon you to the service (4)
25 The Saint has one (4)

Solution to Crossword No 41 which appeared in the September edition of the ASLEF Journal. Congratulations to **Paul Crabtree** from **Rossendale, Lancs**

ACROSS 1 Fishplate 8 Holiday Season 11 Ruhr 12 Adios 13 Vera 16 Harbour 17 DeskTop 18 Taffeta 20 Tintern 21Chef 22 Stamp 23Afar 26 Train Spotters 27 TimeTable **DOWN** 2 Iris 3 Hoarder 4 Lassoed 5 Team 6 Mother Of Pearl 7 Robert Redford 9 Architect 10 Carpentry 14 Yodel 15 Using 19 Artiste 20 Tombola 24 Mini 25 STOL

Thanks for all your responses to the 41st ASLEF crossword in the September edition. If you complete this month's crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 9 Arkwright Road, London NW3 6AB by the 14th of the issue month.

The winner of this month's crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25

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